

[Two of My All-Time Favorite Final Arguments](#)

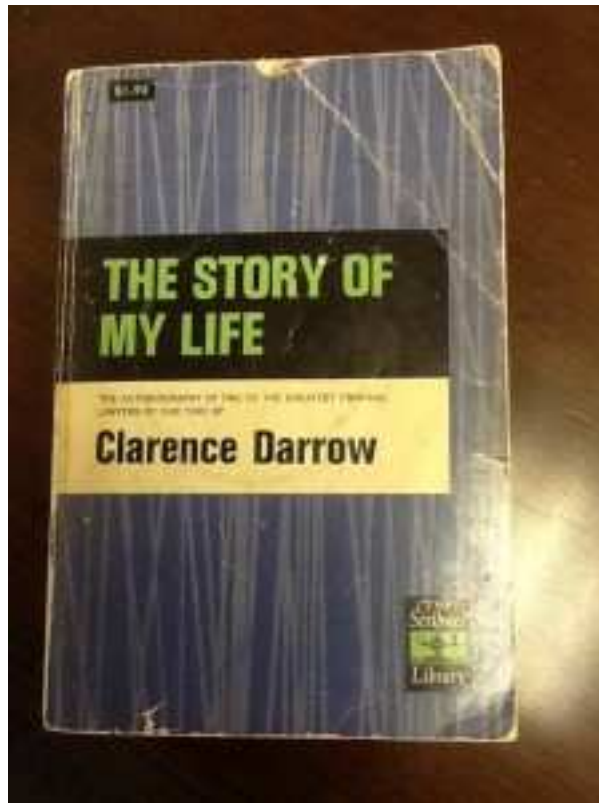
By [Cordell Parvin](#) on July 6th, 2012

I recently watched [PBS American Masters](#) documentary [Harper Lee: Hey, Boo](#). If you can spare an hour and 25 minutes, I urge you to watch it. If you want to get a preview watch this short segment from the documentary about Scout.

[Documentary Edge 2011 – Hey, Boo Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird](#)



I can't remember when I first read Harper Lee's book [To Kill a Mockingbird](#). I think I read it after I saw the movie. I do remember purchasing and reading Clarence Darrow's autobiography: [The Story of My Life](#) for \$1.95. As you can see below, I still have the book.



I was inspired to become a lawyer by final arguments given by [Atticus Finch](#) and [Clarence Darrow](#). Both represented black defendants before prejudiced all white juries. Atticus closed with:

One more thing, gentlemen, before I quit. Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal. ... There is a tendency ... for certain people to use this phrase out of context, to satisfy all conditions. ... We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people would have us believe — some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity because they're born with it, some men make more money than others, some ladies make better cakes than others — some people are born gifted beyond the normal scope of most men. But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal — there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution, gentlemen, is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest J.P. Court in the land or this honorable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal.

We all know that Atticus did not persuade the jury. But, few know that Clarence Darrow did persuade the jury in the second [Sweet Trial](#). Clarence Darrow closed with:

Gentlemen, what do you think is your duty in this case? I have watched, day after day, these black, tense faces that have crowded this court. These black faces that now are looking to you twelve whites, feeling that the hopes and fears of a race are in your keeping.

This case is about to end, gentlemen. To them, it is life. Not one of their color sits on this jury. Their fate is in the hands of twelve whites. Their eyes are fixed on you, their hearts go out to you, and their hopes hang on your verdict.

This is all. I ask you, on behalf of this defendant, on behalf of these helpless ones who turn to you, and more than that,—on behalf of this great state, and this great city which must face this problem, and face it fairly,—I ask you, in the name of progress and of the human race, to return a verdict of not guilty in this case!

You can read about the case and Darrow's entire final argument at the link above.

I never got the opportunity to make the difference Atticus Finch and Clarence Darrow made in these two cases. But, just watching the Harper Lee documentary inspired me once again. What inspires you?

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